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UNCLAS COLOMBO 000031

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SA/INS AND CA/OCS
STATE ALSO PASS USAID/DCHA/OFDA - THAYER, FLEMING, GARVELINK
GENEVA FOR NANCY KYLOW
BANGKOK FOR USAID/OFDA - TOM DOLAN
NEW DELHI FOR FAS
USPACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AEMR](#) [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [CE](#) [MV](#)

SUBJECT: TFX001: SRI LANKA AND MALDIVES, SITREP. NO. 8,
JANUARY 4

REF: COLOMBO 0016 AND PREVIOUS

SRI LANKA

1. (U) Casualties: According to Government statistics, 30,229 people died in the tsunami; 3,858 remain missing; 835,028 have been displaced. A total of 7 Americans have been confirmed killed in the disaster.

2. (SBU) U.S. Actions/Assistance: The Ambassador, accompanied by Brigadier General Panter, head of the Combined Support Group Sri Lanka (CSGSL), USAID/OFDA DART leader Bill Berger and DATT, met on January 4 with the Secretaries of Defense, Finance and Foreign Affairs to discuss disaster assistance operations. They agreed on a notional list of operations U.S. military might undertake, mainly medium engineering reconstruction efforts. Sri Lankans requested heavy lift capabilities and heavy engineering assistance also. They were told that at present heavy lift capabilities would be deployed to Indonesia, not Sri Lanka. Sri Lankans also clarified the support they were ready to provide in terms of space for U.S. troops and equipment. The meeting was very useful as it allowed us to clarify for the Government what our capabilities are, and for us to understand what the Government is looking for. The need for heavy lift capability is very real, and no other nation, including the Indians, is able to provide it. Provision of some heavy lift assets would have major impact here.

3. (SBU) U.S. Actions/Assistance: On January 4 the Ambassador, accompanied by Brigadier General Panter, DART leader Berger and DATT, also met with Education Secretary Tara De Mel, who has been named by President Kumaratunga to head the Center for National Operations managing the national relief effort, to brief her on the capabilities and assistance possible through the combined USG response to the disaster. The Ambassador stressed that the U.S. effort is being closely coordinated with the Government, as well as with other bilateral and multilateral donors. De Mel noted that coordination with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is improving, although some "distance" remains. According to De Mel, information on casualties and displaced persons from LTTE-controlled territory is still "sketchy." She reported that the ICRC, rather than the Government, is taking relief supplies into LTTE areas.

4. (SBU) U.S. Actions/Assistance (cont.): Two C-5s carrying trucks, generators, engineering equipment and life-support equipment are expected to land later January 4.

MALDIVES

5. (SBU) The combined Embassy/DAO/DART/CSGSL team returned from Maldives on January 4. Specific immediate needs include water availability and distribution, followed by temporary shelter, clearance of debris, and rehabilitation of generators and fishing vessels. An overriding need for all relief efforts is logistical support to distribute resources and expertise to the affected islands. Sitrep on Maldives will follow septel.

LUNSTEAD